CHAPTER 17

The Method for SAT Reading Questions

LEARNING OBJECTIVES

After completing this chapter, you will be able to:

- Read SAT Reading passages strategically
- Apply the Method for SAT Reading Questions efficiently and effectively to SAT Reading questions

How to Do SAT Reading

The SAT Reading section is made up of four passages and one set of paired passages, each approximately 500–750 words long and accompanied by 10–11 questions for a total of 52 questions in the section. To tackle all of this effectively in 65 minutes, the most successful test takers:

- **Read the passages strategically to zero in on the text that leads to points. (See the "Strategic Reading" section of this chapter for a quick overview and chapter 18 for more instruction and practice.)**
- **Approach the questions with a method that minimizes rereading and leads directly to correct answers. (See the "Method for SAT Reading Questions" section of this chapter for an overview and chapters 19 and 20 for more instruction and practice on how to tackle an SAT Reading question set.)**

The key to maximizing correct answers is learning in advance the kinds of questions that the test asks. SAT Reading questions focus more on the author's purpose (*why* she wrote this passage) and the passage's structure (*how* the author makes and supports her points) than on the details or facts of the subject matter (*what* this passage is about).

Knowing that the SAT rewards your attention to *how* and *why* the author wrote the passage or chose to include certain words or examples puts you in the driver's seat. You can read more effectively and answer the questions more quickly and confidently.

In this chapter, we'll give you an overview of how to tackle Reading passages and questions. The other chapters in this unit will help you become a stronger reader and will present the five SAT Reading question types, as well as tips for improving your approach for paired passages and literature passages.

Try the passage and questions that follow on your own. Then, keep reading to compare your approach to ours.

Questions 1–10 refer to the following passage.

This passage describes the varying and changing scientific theories surrounding sunspots.

Astronomers noted more than 150 years ago that sunspots wax and wane in number in an 11-year cycle. Ever since, people have speculated that the solar cycle might exert some influence on the Earth's weather. In this century, for example, scientists have linked the solar cycle to droughts in the American Midwest. Until recently, however, none of these correlations has held up under close scrutiny.

One problem is that sunspots themselves have been poorly understood. Observation revealed that the swirly smudges represent areas of intense magnetic activity where the sun's radiative energy has been blocked and that they are considerably cooler than bright regions of the sun. Scientists had not been able, however, to determine just how sunspots are created or what effect they have on the solar constant (a misnomer that refers to the sun's total radiance at any instant).

The latter question, at least, seems to have been resolved by data from the *Solar Maximum Mission* satellite, which has monitored the solar constant since 1980, which was the peak of a solar cycle. As the number of sunspots decreased through 1986, the satellite recorded a gradual dimming of the sun. Over the next year, as sunspots proliferated, the sun brightened. These data suggest that the sun is 0.1 percent more luminous at the peak of the solar cycle, when the number of sunspots is greatest, than at its nadir, according to Richard C. Willson of the Jet Propulsion Laboratory and Hugh S. Hudson of the University of California at San Diego.

The data show that sunspots do not themselves make the sun shine brighter. Quite the contrary. When a sunspot appears, it initially causes the sun to dim slightly, but then after a period of weeks or months islands of brilliance called faculas usually emerge near the sunspot and more than compensate for its dimming effect. Willson says faculas may represent regions where energy that initially was blocked beneath a sunspot has finally breached the surface.

Does the subtle fluctuation in the solar constant manifest itself in the Earth's weather? Meteorological reports offer statistical evidence that it does, albeit rather indirectly. The link seems to be mediated by a phenomenon known as the quasi-biennial oscillation (QBO), a 180-degree shift in the direction of stratospheric winds above the Tropics that occurs about every two years.

Karin Labitzke of the Free University of Berlin and Harry van Loon of the National Center for Atmospheric Research in Boulder, Colorado, were the first to uncover the QBO link. They gathered temperature and air-pressure readings from various latitudes and altitudes over the past three solar cycles. They found no correlation between the solar cycle and their data until they sorted the data into two categories: those gathered during the QBO's west phase (when the stratospheric winds blow west) and those gathered during its east phase. A remarkable correlation appeared: temperatures and pressures coincident with the QBO's west phase rose and fell in accordance with the solar cycle.

Building on this finding, Brian A. Tinsley of the National Science Foundation discovered a statistical correlation between the solar cycle and the position of storms in the North Atlantic. The latitude of storms during the west phase of the QBO, Tinsley found, varied with the solar cycle: storms occurring toward the peak of a solar cycle traveled at latitudes about six degrees nearer the Equator than storms during the cycle's nadir.

Labitzke, van Loon, and Tinsley acknowledge that their findings are still rather mysterious. Why does the solar cycle seem to exert more of an influence during the west phase of the QBO than it does during the east phase? How does the 0.1 percent variance in solar radiation trigger the much larger changes—up to six degrees Celsius in polar regions—observed by Labitzke and van Loon? Van Loon says simply, "We can't explain it."

John A. Eddy of the National Center for Atmospheric Research, nonetheless, thinks these QBO findings as well as the *Solar Maximum*

Mission data "look like breakthroughs" in the search for a link between the solar cycle
90 and weather. With further research into how the oceans damp the effects of solar flux, for example, these findings may lead to models that have some predictive value. The next few years may be particularly rich in solar flux.

1. Which one of the following best describes the main idea of the passage?

   A) The scientific advances provided by the research of Labitzke and van Loon have finally cleared up some of the mysteries that long plagued the study of sunspots.

   B) Recent research combining astronomical and climate data provides a promising foundation for better understanding the relationship between sunspots and Earth's weather.

   C) Despite recent breakthroughs, scientists are unlikely to ever fully explain correlations between sunspot activity and Earth's weather patterns.

   D) Scientists have used data from the *Solar Maximum Mission* satellite to explain how sunspots affect Earth's climate during the quasi-biennial oscillation's west phase.

2. The author's point of view can best be described as that of

   A) a meteorologist voicing optimism that the findings of recent solar research will improve weather forecasting.

   B) an astronomer presenting a digest of current findings to a review board of other astronomers.

   C) a science writer explaining the possible influence of a solar phenomenon on terrestrial weather patterns.

   D) a historian listing the contributions to climate science made by the *Solar Maximum Mission.*

3. The passage indicates which of the following about the sun's luminosity and the solar cycle?

   A) Scientists have found no correlation between the sun's brightness and the solar cycle.

   B) The sun is brightest at the nadir of the solar cycle.

   C) The sun is brightest at the peak and again at the nadir of the solar cycle.

   D) The sun is brightest at the peak of the solar cycle.

4. Which one of the following provides the best evidence for the answer to the previous question?

   A) Lines 10–11 ("One problem . . . understood")
   B) Lines 15–18 ("Scientists had . . . constant")
   C) Lines 20–24 ("The latter . . . cycle")
   D) Lines 27–31 ("These data . . . nadir")

5. Based on information in the passage, it can most reasonably be inferred that faculas

   A) are directly responsible for increased temperatures on Earth.
   B) have a dimming effect on the sun's luminescence during sunspot activity.
   C) are mostly likely to appear at the peak of the solar cycle.
   D) grow in number as the number of sunspots decreases.

6. Which one of the following provides the best evidence for the answer to the previous question?

   A) Lines 20–24 ("The latter . . . cycle")
   B) Lines 34–35 ("The data . . . brighter")
   C) Lines 36–41 ("When a . . . effect")
   D) Lines 46–47 ("Meteorological . . . indirectly")

7. As used in line 45, "manifest" most nearly means

   A) impact.
   B) disguise.
   C) itemize.
   D) reveal.

8. According to the passage, Labitzke and van Loon's research on the quasi-biennial oscillation (QBO) shows that

   A) the QBO's west phase correlates to the solar cycle.
   B) the QBO's west phase has a longer duration than that of its east phase.
   C) the QBO shows no correlation with the solar cycle.
   D) the reasons for the QBO's correlation to the solar cycle are now well understood.

9. The main purpose of the questions in the second-to-last paragraph (lines 76–84) is to

   A) emphasize how little scientists know about the solar constant.
   B) explain more fully the mysterious nature of the scientists' findings.
   C) question the basis upon which these scientists built their hypotheses.
   D) express doubts about the scientists' interpretations of their findings.

10. The use of the quoted phrase "look like breakthroughs" in line 88 is primarily meant to convey the idea that

    A) information about the solar cycle has allowed scientists to predict changes in Earth's complex climate system.
    B) additional analysis of the link between the solar cycle and Earth's weather may yield useful models.
    C) despite the associated costs, space missions can lead to important discoveries.
    D) an alternative interpretation of the data may contradict the initial findings.

Strategic Reading

The SAT Reading Test is an open-book test; the passage is right there for you to reference. Moreover, the SAT actively tests your skill in looking up details; there are Command of Evidence questions that actually ask you to cite the line numbers for the evidence you used to answer a question. Because of the way the test is constructed, it is in your best interest to read fairly quickly, noting the outline of the passage as you go, marking up the page as you read with margin notes, getting a solid understanding of the main idea, but not taking the time to memorize details. (If you are taking the digital SAT, you will have a tool available to highlight words and phrases in the passage, and you will still be able to take notes.) You can think of this process of outlining the passage as **mapping** it: you are taking note of its major features but letting go of the minor details.

Be sure to read the pre-passage blurb, the short introduction that comes before the passage. Identify any information that helps you to understand the topic of the passage or to anticipate what the author will discuss. For the previous passage, the blurb states the topic (sunspots) and announces that the passage will discuss "varying and changing theories" about them. That's an invitation to keep your eye out for multiple theories as you read.

You'll learn all the skills you need to read strategically in chapter 18, but for now, here's an example of an expert's passage map. Don't worry if yours doesn't look exactly like this (or even anything like this, yet). Follow the expert's thought process in the discussion that follows the passage to see what he was thinking and asking as he read the passage.

Questions 1–10 refer to the following passage.

This passage details the varying and changing scientific theories surrounding sunspots.

Sunspots Passage Map

Astronomers noted more than 150 years ago that sunspots wax and wane in number in an 11-year cycle. Ever since, people have speculated that the solar cycle might exert some influence on the Earth's weather. In this century, for example, scientists have linked the solar cycle to droughts in the American Midwest. Until recently, however, none of these correlations has held up under close scrutiny.

Sunspot cycle & earth weather

One problem is that sunspots themselves have been poorly understood. Observation revealed that the swirly smudges represent areas of intense magnetic activity where the sun's radiative energy has been blocked and that they are considerably cooler than bright regions of the sun. Scientists had not been able, however, to determine just how sunspots are created or what effect they have on the solar constant (a misnomer that refers to the sun's total radiance at any instant).

Sunspots poorly understood

The latter question, at least, seems to have been resolved by data from the *Solar Maximum Mission* satellite, which has monitored the solar constant since 1980, which was the peak of a solar cycle. As the number of sunspots decreased through 1986, the satellite recorded a gradual dimming of the sun. Over the next year, as sunspots proliferated, the sun brightened. These data suggest that the sun is 0.1 percent more luminous at the peak of the solar cycle, when the number of sunspots is greatest, than at its nadir, according to Richard C. Willson of the Jet Propulsion Laboratory and Hugh S. Hudson of the University of California at San Diego.

SMM satellite

Sunspot cycle and sun's brightness

The data show that sunspots do not themselves make the sun shine brighter. Quite the contrary. When a sunspot appears, it initially causes the sun to dim slightly, but then after a period of weeks or months islands of brilliance called faculas usually emerge near the sunspot and more than compensate for its dimming effect. Willson says faculas may represent regions

Sunspots dim, but faculas even brighter

ANALYSIS

Pre-passage blurb: The passage addresses various and changing theories about sunspots. Keep track of the different ideas and how they've evolved.

¶1: The author introduces the passage's topic—*sunspots*—and zeroes in on a more specific question: *how do they affect Earth's weather?* People have been investigating this for 150 years, but (note the contrast word "however" in line 8) only recently have they gotten some answers. The author will say more about these answers in coming paragraphs.

¶2: The author defines sunspots: areas where magnetic activity blocks some of the sun's energy. However (again, there's a contrast where the author wants to make a point), scientists still have questions: *how are sunspots created and how do they affect the sun's brightness?*

¶3: Here's the first recent discovery. The SMM satellite shows that the sun gets brighter with more sunspots (the solar cycle peak) and dimmer with fewer sunspots (the solar cycle nadir). This sets up a question that the author will have to answer: *If sunspots block and cool the sun's energy, how can the sun be brighter with more sunspots?*

¶4: The author clears up the paradox from the previous paragraph. Sunspots *initially* block the sun's energy, but (this author loves contrasts) then faculas—super bright hot spots—pop up around the sunspots. Faculas are so bright that they "more than compensate" for the sunspots' dimming effect. That's a lot about sunspots, but the author still needs to tie this to Earth's weather.

where energy that initially was blocked beneath a sunspot has finally breached the surface.

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Building on this finding, Brian A. Tinsley of the National Science Foundation discovered a statistical correlation between the solar cycle and the position of storms in the North Atlantic. The latitude of storms during the west phase of the QBO, Tinsley found, varied with the solar cycle: storms occurring toward the peak of a solar cycle traveled at latitudes about six degrees nearer the Equator than storms during the cycle's nadir.

Labitzke, van Loon, and Tinsley acknowledge that their findings are still rather mysterious. Why does the solar cycle seem to exert more of an influence during the west phase of the QBO than it does during the east phase? How does the 0.1 percent variance in solar radiation trigger the much larger changes—up to six degrees Celsius in polar regions—observed by Labitzke and van Loon? Van Loon says simply, "We can't explain it."

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Indirect weather effects (QBO)

Sunspot correlation to temp and air pressure

Link to storm patterns

Scientists can't fully explain links

¶5: Here, the author starts to connect sunspots to the weather. It introduces something called the QBO that makes winds in the atmosphere change direction every two years. The next paragraph has to tie this to sunspots.

¶6: This paragraph discusses the research of two scientists, Labitzke and van Loon. They found that when the winds are moving westward, temperatures and air pressure correlate to the solar cycle (the cycle of more and fewer sunspots).

¶7: A different scientist—Tinsley—also correlated the sunspot cycle to the position of storms in the Atlantic Ocean. So far, the studies suggest that sunspots do affect the weather, but they don't say how or why.

¶8: This is a little disappointing: the scientists still don't know how or why sunspots seem to affect temperature and air pressure or the location of storms.

¶9: The author ends by citing one more scientist—Eddy—who is optimistic. He calls the research and the SMM satellite data a breakthrough and thinks we can learn a lot more about sunspots and the weather in the next few years.

Mission data "look like breakthroughs" in the search for a link between the solar cycle and weather. With further research into how the oceans damp the effects of solar flux, for example, these findings may lead to models that have some predictive value. The next few years may be particularly rich in solar flux.

Break-throughs, but more research needed

BIG PICTURE

Main Idea: Scientists have learned quite a bit about sunspots and Earth's weather recently (faculas, the QBO, and storms are all evidence for that) and hope to learn more soon.

Author's Purpose: To outline the recent data and research suggesting that there is a connection between sunspots and the weather (but she doesn't go too far or say that all the mysteries have been solved)

Notice that the SAT expert reads actively, consistently summing up and paraphrasing what the author has said, asking what must come next, and never getting too caught up in details. The expert reader is not thrown off by encountering a new or unfamiliar term. He uses context to understand what it must mean and remembers that he can always consult the passage if he needs to remember a name or a definition. Finally, before turning to the questions, the expert takes a few seconds to summarize the big picture. This will help him answer questions about the passage's main idea and the author's purpose or point of view. To state the main idea, the author's take-home message to the reader, ask yourself what the author would tell the reader if she only had a few seconds to make her point.

The Method for SAT Reading Questions

The best-prepared SAT test takers know that time is one of the SAT Reading section's biggest challenges. They also know that trying to speed up and cut corners can lead to sloppy mistakes, or worse, to reading a paragraph over and over because it just isn't sinking in. So, after setting themselves up for success with helpful passage notes and clear big picture summary, SAT experts use a simple four-step method to tackle each question quickly and confidently.

The Method for SAT Reading Questions	
Step 1.	**Unpack the question stem**
Step 2.	**Research the answer**
Step 3.	**Predict the answer**
Step 4.	**Find the one correct answer**

For example, take a look at this question from the set above:

> The passage indicates which of the following about the sun's luminosity and the solar cycle?
>
> A) Scientists have found no correlation between the sun's brightness and the solar cycle.
> B) The sun is brightest at the nadir of the solar cycle.
> C) The sun is brightest at the peak and again at the nadir of the solar cycle.
> D) The sun is brightest at the peak of the solar cycle.

Because different question types require different strategies, start by *unpacking* the information in the question stem and identifying the question type. You'll learn to name and characterize six SAT Reading question types in chapter 19. The word "indicates" tells you that this is a Detail question, which means that you should be able to find the correct answer in the passage almost verbatim. Also note any research clues. This question asks about the "sun's luminosity," or its brightness.

Next, based on the type of question, *research* the passage or consult your passage map to get the information you need. For this question, you have a margin note for paragraph 3 that says, "SMM sat data: more sunspots = brighter," so direct your research to paragraph 3. Here's the sentence you need: "These data suggest that the sun is 0.1 percent more luminous at the peak of the solar cycle, when the number of sunspots is greatest, than at its nadir."

Now, with the relevant part of the passage in mind, *predict* what the correct answer will say. In this case, you're looking for an answer choice that says that the sun is either brighter at the peak of the solar cycle or dimmer at its nadir.

Finally, check your prediction against the choices and *find* the one correct answer that matches. If you find yourself struggling with two or more answer choices, stop. Rephrase your prediction to establish what the correct answer must say and evaluate the choices against that prediction. Here, only choice **(D)** is a match for the prediction based on the research you did: the sun is indeed brightest at the peak of the solar cycle.

You'll learn the strategies and tactics that experts use for steps 2–4 in chapter 20.

Take a look at our expert's application of the SAT Reading Method to the questions from the Sunspots passage. Look for questions on which your own approach could have been faster and more confident.

Question	Analysis
1. Which one of the following best describes the main idea of the passage? A) The scientific advances provided by researchers such as Labitzke and van Loon have finally cleared up some of the mysteries that long plagued the study of sunspots. B) Recent research combining astronomical and climate data provides a promising foundation for better understanding the relationship between sunspots and Earth's weather. C) Despite recent breakthroughs, scientists are unlikely to ever fully explain correlations between sunspot activity and Earth's weather patterns. D) Scientists have used data from the *Solar Maximum Mission* satellite to explain how sunspots affect Earth's climate during the quasi-biennial oscillation's west phase.	**Step 1: Unpack the question stem.** Questions that ask for the main idea or primary purpose of a passage are Global questions. With a strong big picture summary, these can be answered quickly and confidently. **Step 2: Research the answer.** The main idea of this passage was that scientists have learned quite a bit about sunspots and Earth's weather patterns (e.g., faculas, the QBO, and storms) and are optimistic that they will soon be able to provide more answers. **Step 3: Predict the answer.** The correct answer will match the Main Idea summary. **Step 4: Find the one correct answer.** Choice **(B)** is correct; it matches the scope of the passage without being too broad or too narrow. (A) is too narrow (Labitzke and van Loon were only two of the scientists cited in the passage) and distorts the passage by suggesting that they have "cleared up" the mysteries, when they admit they're still baffled by some of what they've found. (C) presents a pessimistic tone at odds with the optimism that closes the passage. (D) distorts what the passage said about the solar cycle and the QBO; scientists discovered a correlation between the two, but have not yet explained how or why this happens.

Question	Analysis
2. The author's point of view can best be described as that of A) a meteorologist voicing optimism that the findings of recent solar research will improve weather forecasting. B) an astronomer presenting a digest of current findings to a review board of other astronomers. C) a science writer explaining the possible influence of a solar phenomenon on terrestrial weather patterns. D) a historian listing the contributions to climate science made by the *Solar Maximum Mission*.	**Step 1: Unpack the question stem.** Questions that ask about the passage's main idea or the author's overall purpose or point of view are called Global questions. **Step 2: Research the answer.** This question covers the passage as a whole, so the big picture summaries will help predict the answer. **Step 3: Predict the answer.** The author's purpose is to outline recent developments in sunspot research, and the tone and language suggest a general readership. The correct answer will reflect this. **Step 4: Find the one correct answer.** Choice **(C)** matches the prediction. (A) goes outside the scope of the passage; the author focuses on the science behind the discoveries, not on applications like weather forecasting. (B) suggests an expert presentation to an academic peer group; this passage is more journalistic than that. (D) is too narrow; the *Solar Maximum Mission* is mentioned only in the third paragraph.
3. The passage indicates which of the following about the sun's luminosity and the solar cycle? A) Scientists have found no correlation between the sun's brightness and the solar cycle. B) The sun is brightest at the nadir of the solar cycle. C) The sun is brightest at the peak and again at the nadir of the solar cycle. D) The sun is brightest at the peak of the solar cycle.	**Step 1: Unpack the question stem.** A question asking what the passage "indicates" is a Detail question. The correct answer will paraphrase something stated explicitly in the passage. Research paragraph 3 where the author discusses the solar cycle. **Step 2: Research the answer.** Data gathered by the SMM satellite shows that the sun is brightest at the peak of the solar cycle and dimmest at its nadir. **Step 3: Predict the answer.** Your research provides clear-cut criteria for the correct answer: the sun is brightest at the peak of the solar cycle and dimmest at its nadir. **Step 4: Find the one correct answer.** Choice **(D)** matches your prediction and is correct. (A) is contradicted by the passage, though this choice may have been tempting if you stopped after paragraph 2, which says that, until relatively recently, scientists did not know how the two were correlated. (B) says the opposite of what the passage says on this subject. (C) misstates the passage by claiming that the sun brightens again at the nadir of the solar cycle.

Question	Analysis
4. Which one of the following provides the best evidence for the answer to the previous question? A) Lines 10–11 ("One problem . . . understood") B) Lines 15–18 ("Scientists had . . . constant") C) Lines 20–24 ("The latter . . . cycle") D) Lines 27–31 ("These data . . . nadir")	**Step 1: Unpack the question stem.** This is a Command of Evidence question that asks you to locate a piece of text stated in the passage that supports another statement, most often, as it is in this case, the correct answer to the preceding question. **Step 2: Research the answer.** In Command of Evidence questions, the answer choices all designate specific sentences or statements in the passage and indicate their precise locations by line numbers. Use the choices to conduct your research, keeping in mind that the correct answer here must support the correct answer to the preceding question. **Step 3: Predict the answer.** The answer to the preceding question came directly from the final sentence in paragraph 3, lines 27–33. **Step 4: Find the one correct answer.** Choice **(D)** cites the evidence for the correct answer to the preceding question, making it the correct choice for this Command of Evidence question. (A) summarizes the problems that scientists studying sunspots had in the past. (B) comes from paragraph 2 and describes the questions scientists still had before the SMM satellite data. (C) comes from the beginning of paragraph 3; it describes the source of the data but does not support the answer to the preceding question.

Question	Analysis
5. Based on information in the passage, it can most reasonably be inferred that faculas A) are directly responsible for increased temperatures on Earth. B) have a dimming effect on the sun's luminescence during sunspot activity. C) are mostly likely to appear at the peak of the solar cycle. D) grow in number as the number of sunspots decreases.	**Step 1: Unpack the question stem.** Questions that ask you for a statement that is "based on" the passage are Inference questions. The correct answer may combine two statements to reach a conclusion. **Step 2: Research the answer.** Faculas are discussed in paragraph 4. The passage says they are likely areas where the energy blocked by sunspots breaks through the sun's surface, and that they are probably why the sun is brightest when sunspot activity is high even though sunspots slightly dim the sun. **Step 3: Predict the answer.** In most Inference questions, you won't be able to predict the correct answer word for word, but you can characterize the correct answer as the only one that will follow directly from the relevant text (in this case, paragraph 4). **Step 4: Find the one correct answer.** Choice **(C)** is correct; if faculas are caused by sunspots, there will likely be more of them when there are more sunspots, in other words, at the peak of the solar cycle. (A) is too strong; scientists have found an indirect relationship between sunspot activity and Earth's weather (line 47). (B) is the opposite of what the passage states; faculas are so bright that they "more than compensate" for sunspots' dimming effect. (D) is the direct opposite of the correct answer.

Question	Analysis
6. Which one of the following provides the best evidence for the answer to the previous question? A) Lines 20–24 ("The latter . . . cycle") B) Lines 34–35 ("The data . . . brighter") C) Lines 36–41 ("When a . . . effect") D) Lines 46–47 ("Meteorological . . . indirectly")	**Step 1: Unpack the question stem.** This is a Command of Evidence question that asks you to locate a piece of text stated in the passage that supports another statement, most often, as it is in this case, the correct answer to the preceding question. **Step 2: Research the answer.** Because the previous question was about faculas, the correct answer to this question supports the fact that sunspots are most likely to appear at the peak of the solar cycle. **Step 3: Predict the answer.** For Command of Evidence questions asking for the text that supports the previous answer, use that answer to evaluate the excerpt in each choice. **Step 4: Find the one correct answer.** Choice **(C)** is correct; this is the sentence that explains the relationship between sunspots and faculas, and thus supports the correct answer to the previous question. (A) cites text that provides background information about the SMM. (B) contains a sentence that sets up the introduction of faculas but does not support the correct answer from the previous question. (D) is from the paragraph in which the author begins discussing the relationship between the solar cycle and Earth's weather.
7. As used in line 45, "manifest" most nearly means A) impact. B) disguise. C) itemize. D) reveal.	**Step 1: Unpack the question stem.** This is a Vocabulary-in-Context question. The correct answer will be a word that could take the place of the word in the question stem without changing the meaning of the sentence. **Step 2: Research the answer.** For Vocab-in-Context, read the full sentence containing the word cited in the question stem. **Step 3: Predict the answer.** The scientists in the passage are studying whether the influence of sunspots can be seen in Earth's weather, so "manifest" must mean something like *show* or *display*. **Step 4: Find the one correct answer.** The prediction leads to the correct answer, **(D)**. Choice (A) does not fit the context; the solar cycle might impact the weather, but wouldn't impact itself. (B) means the opposite of the correct answer. (C) suggests another meaning of the word "manifest," which could also refer to a list of items in a shipment.

Question	Analysis
8. According to the passage, Labitzke and van Loon's research on the quasi-biennial oscillation (QBO) shows that A) the QBO's west phase correlates to the solar cycle. B) the QBO's west phase has a longer duration than that of its east phase. C) the QBO shows no correlation with the solar cycle. D) the reasons for the QBO's correlation to the solar cycle are now well understood.	**Step 1: Unpack the question stem.** "According to the passage" signals a Detail question. The answer will be contained in the passage text. **Step 2: Research the answer.** The QBO is introduced in paragraph 5, and Labitzke and van Loon's research is discussed in detail in paragraph 6. **Step 3: Predict the answer.** In a question like this one, it's difficult to predict the exact language of the correct answer choice, but we know it will conform to one of the facts presented in paragraph 6. The researchers tried to correlate temperature and air pressure to the solar cycle. At first, they saw no connection, but when they broke down the QBO into its east and west phases, they found a correlation to the west phase. **Step 4: Find the one correct answer.** Choice **(A)** matches the last sentence of paragraph 6 and is correct. (B) contradicts the passage; the shift from east to west and back occurs roughly every two years. (C) misuses a detail from the passage; the two researchers found no correlation *until* they split the QBO into its east and west phases. (D) contradicts paragraph 8, in which the scientists reveal that they still aren't sure why the QBO's west phase correlates to sunspot activity.

Question	Analysis
9. The main purpose of the questions in the second-to-last paragraph (lines 76–84) is to A) emphasize how little scientists know about the solar constant. B) explain more fully the mysterious nature of the scientists' findings. C) question the basis upon which these scientists built their hypotheses. D) express doubts about the scientists' interpretations of their findings.	**Step 1: Unpack the question stem.** A question that asks why the author included something in the text is a Function question. The correct answer will explain the author's purpose for including questions in paragraph 8. **Step 2: Research the answer.** This question stem leads you directly to paragraph 8. Determine what the author was trying to achieve by including questions there. **Step 3: Predict the answer.** The author uses the questions in paragraph 8 to illustrate why the scientists consider some of their findings "rather mysterious": despite all that they've learned to date, there are still several questions they can't answer. **Step 4: Find the one correct answer.** The prediction leads to the correct answer, **(B)**; the questions are included to explain why the scientists would consider their finding *mysterious*. (A) doesn't match the context of paragraph 8, which follows several paragraphs about how much scientists have recently learned. (C) runs counter to the author's purpose; the author doesn't try to call the scientist's findings into question. (D) is also out of step with the author's position; the author doesn't say or imply that the scientists have misunderstood the discoveries.

Question	Analysis
10. The use of the quoted phrase "look like breakthroughs" in line 88 is primarily meant to convey the idea that A) information about the solar cycle has allowed scientists to predict changes in Earth's complex climate system. B) additional analysis of the link between the solar cycle and Earth's weather may yield useful models. C) despite the associated costs, space missions can lead to important discoveries. D) an alternative interpretation of the data may contradict the initial findings.	**Step 1: Unpack the question stem.** A question that asks how an author supports a point made in the passage, or that asks why the author included something, is a Function question. **Step 2: Research the answer.** This question stem contains a line number. Examine the text immediately before and after the cited line to determine the context of the quote. The quote from the question stem was given by John A. Eddy, who believes that the recent findings will lead to additional exciting discoveries about the relationship between sunspots and Earth's weather patterns. **Step 3: Predict the answer.** The author includes the quote to show optimism about the potential for further research. **Step 4: Find the one correct answer.** The prediction matches correct answer **(B)**. Choice (A) is too strong; scientists may create predictive models in the near future, but they haven't yet. (C) appears to refer to the *Solar Maximum Mission*, but Eddy's quote refers to that *and* the subsequent research; the author doesn't include Eddy's quote to make a point just about space missions. (D) runs contrary to Eddy's optimism.

Putting It All Together

To recap: to do well on SAT Reading, you should:

- Read *actively*, asking what the author's purpose is in writing each paragraph. Anticipate where the passage will go. "Map" the passage by jotting down summaries for each paragraph. You might also circle or underline keywords that indicate the author's opinion, details she wishes to highlight or emphasize, and the comparisons and contrasts she makes in the passage. Note the the passage's main idea and the author's primary purpose in writing it. You will focus on active reading and passage mapping in chapter 18.
- Once you have read and marked up the passage, use the following method to attack the question set:

The Method for SAT Reading Questions	
Step 1.	**Unpack the question stem**
Step 2.	**Research the answer**
Step 3.	**Predict the answer**
Step 4.	**Find the one correct answer**

By reading strategically and using the Method for SAT Reading Questions every time you practice, you'll internalize the steps. By test day, you'll be attacking this section efficiently and accurately without even thinking about it.

In the next section, you'll see another SAT Reading passage accompanied by 11 questions. Map the passage and apply the Method for SAT Reading Questions presented in this lesson to answer the questions as quickly and confidently as possible.

How Much Have You Learned?

Directions: Take 15 minutes to map this passage and answer the questions. Assess your work by comparing it to the expert responses at the end of the chapter.

Questions 1–11 refer to the following passage.

This passage is adapted from Carrie Chapman Catt's 1917 "Address to the United States Congress." Catt served as president of the National American Woman Suffrage Association, which advocated giving women the right to vote; the closing arguments from her speech are excerpted below.

Your party platforms have pledged woman suffrage. Then why not be honest, frank friends of our cause, adopt it in reality as your own, make it a party program and "fight with us"? As a party measure—a measure of all parties—why not put the amendment through Congress and the Legislatures? We shall all be better friends, we shall have a happier nation, we women will be free to support loyally the party of our choice, and we shall be far prouder of our history.

"There is one thing mightier than kings and armies"—aye, than Congresses and political parties—"the power of an idea when its time has come to move." The time for woman suffrage has come. The woman's hour has struck. If parties prefer to postpone action longer and thus do battle with this idea, they challenge the inevitable. The idea will not perish; the party which opposes it may. Every delay, every trick, every political dishonesty from now on will antagonize the women of the land more and more, and when the party or parties which have so delayed woman suffrage finally let it come, their sincerity will be doubted and their appeal to the new voters will be met with suspicion. This is the psychology of the situation. Can you afford the risk? Think it over.

We know you will meet opposition. There are a few "woman haters" left, a few "old males of the tribe," as Vance Thompson calls them, whose duty they believe it to be to keep women in the places they have carefully picked out for them. Treitschke, made world famous by war literature, said some years ago: "Germany, which knows all about Germany and France, knows far better what is good for Alsace-Lorraine than that miserable people can possibly know." A few American Treitschkes we have who know better than women what is good for them. There are women, too. . . . But the world does not wait for such as these, nor does Liberty pause to heed the plaint of men and women with a grouch. She does not wait for those who have a special interest to serve, nor a selfish reason for depriving other people of freedom. Holding her torch aloft, Liberty is pointing the way onward and upward and saying to America, "Come."

To you the supporters of our cause, in Senate and House, and the number is large, the suffragists of the nation express their grateful thanks. This address is not meant for you. We are more truly appreciative of all you have done than any words can express. We ask you to make a last, hard fight for the amendment during the present session. Since last we asked for a vote on this amendment your position has been fortified by the addition to suffrage territory of Great Britain, Canada, and New York.

Some of you have been too indifferent to give more than casual attention to this question. It is worthy of your immediate consideration—a question big enough to engage the attention of our Allies in war time, is too big a question for you to neglect. . . .

Gentlemen, we hereby petition you, our only designated representatives, to redress our grievances by the immediate passage of the influence to secure its ratification in your own state, in order that the women of our nation may be endowed with political freedom that our nation may resume its world leadership in democracy.

Woman suffrage is coming—you know it. Will you, Honorable Senators and Members of the House of Representatives, help or hinder it?

1. What was Carrie Chapman Catt's primary purpose in giving this speech?

   A) To assert that women will vote for the party that supports their cause
   B) To demand more women candidates on political party tickets
   C) To persuade lawmakers to pass an amendment ensuring women's right to vote
   D) To rally support for women's equal representation in Congress

2. The stance that Catt takes in her speech is best described as that of

   A) a historian reflecting on historical events.
   B) an official campaigning for political office.
   C) an activist advocating for legislative reform.
   D) a reporter investigating a current controversy.

3. What counterclaim does Catt offer to the argument that some men and women still oppose suffrage?

   A) They are not voicing their opinions in Congress.
   B) They cannot stop the inevitable.
   C) They do have just cause for opposition.
   D) They have no legal basis for their claims.

4. Which choice provides the best evidence for the answer to the previous question?

   A) Lines 7–10 ("We shall all . . . our history")
   B) Lines 48–51 ("To you . . . grateful thanks")
   C) Lines 55–58 ("Since last . . . New York")
   D) Lines 60–64 ("It is worthy . . . to neglect")

5. As used in line 20, "antagonize" most nearly means

   A) dishearten.
   B) embitter.
   C) humiliate.
   D) inhibit.

6. The phrase in lines 21–25 ("when the party . . . with suspicion") implies that

   A) women voters will not support lawmakers who have resisted suffrage.
   B) women will not run for office because they do not trust politicians.
   C) women will vote more women into political office.
   D) women's influence on Congress will be minimal and is not a threat.

7. Catt most likely discusses Treitschke (lines 33–37) for which of the following reasons?

   A) To demonstrate support for women's suffrage in Europe
   B) To remind her audience of what happened to a politician who supported unpopular legislation
   C) To contrast his views on Alsace-Lorraine with the American values of freedom and democracy
   D) To draw an analogy between his views and the views of those who believe they know better than women what is best for women

8. The passage indicates which one of the following about the status of women's suffrage at the time of Catt's speech?

   A) At the time, only a minority of the U.S. population supported women's right to vote.
   B) Women already had the right to vote in at least one state in the United States.
   C) An earlier amendment to grant women the right to vote had been defeated.
   D) The women's suffrage movement was a recent development in American politics.

9. Which choice provides the best evidence for the answer to the previous question?

   A) Lines 14–17 ("The time . . . inevitable")
   B) Lines 28–33 ("There are . . . them")
   C) Lines 55–58 ("Since last . . . New York")
   D) Lines 65–72 ("Gentlemen . . . democracy")

10. As used in line 66, "redress" most nearly means

    A) appeal.
    B) communicate.
    C) implement.
    D) remedy.

11. What can you most reasonably infer from the thoughts expressed in lines 69–72 ("in order that . . . in democracy")?

    A) No citizen in our democracy is free as long as women cannot vote.
    B) Other nations have demanded that our government grant woman suffrage.
    C) A nation needs more women in positions of leadership.
    D) Woman suffrage is essential to true democracy.

Answers and Explanations

Carrie Chapman Catt Passage Map

This passage is adapted from Carrie Chapman Catt's 1917 "Address to the United States Congress." Catt served as president of the National American Woman Suffrage Association, which advocated giving women the right to vote; the closing arguments from her speech are excerpted below.

Your party platforms have pledged woman suffrage. Then why not be honest, frank friends of our cause, adopt it in reality as your own, make it a party program and "fight with us"? As a party measure—a measure of all parties—why not put the amendment through Congress and the Legislatures? We shall all be better friends, we shall have a happier nation, we women will be free to support loyally the party of our choice, and we shall be far prouder of our history.

Call for both parties to support women's vote

"There is one thing mightier than kings and armies"—aye, than Congresses and political parties—"the power of an idea when its time has come to move." The time for woman suffrage has come. The woman's hour has struck. If parties prefer to postpone action longer and thus do battle with this idea, they challenge the inevitable. The idea will not perish; the party which opposes it may. Every delay, every trick, every political dishonesty from now on will antagonize the women of the land more and more, and when the party or parties which have so delayed woman suffrage finally let it come, their sincerity will be doubted and their appeal to the new voters will be met with suspicion. This is the psychology of the situation. Can you afford the risk? Think it over.

Time for women's suffrage is NOW

Those who oppose will be suspect in the future

We know you will meet opposition. There are a few "woman haters" left, a few "old males of the tribe," as Vance Thompson calls them, whose duty they believe it to be to keep women in the places they have carefully picked out for them. Treitschke, made world famous by war literature, said some years ago: "Germany, which knows all about Germany and France, knows far better what is good for Alsace-Lorraine than

Still have opponents

Examples

ANALYSIS

Pre-passage blurb: You learn a lot here. Catt is speaking to Congress in 1917. She represents an organization pushing for women's suffrage, that is, the right to vote. The passage represents her closing arguments, so you can expect her to offer evidence and reasoning in support of this cause.

¶1: Catt reminds the members of Congress that their parties have supported women's suffrage in their platforms and encourages them, as individuals, to support it as well. It will make the U.S. a happier, prouder nation.

¶2: Catt asserts that women *will* get the right to vote and, as a warning to congressmen opposing suffrage, she argues that women with the vote will most likely not support the congressmen who tried to delay or undermine their right.

¶3: Catt admits that there will still be some who oppose women's suffrage, but argues that their ideas are out-of-date. She is trying to persuade congressmen who might be swayed by a vocal opposition. She uses a moral argument by equating suffrage with liberty.

that miserable people can possibly know." A few American Treitschkes we have who know better than women what is good for them.

There are women, too... But the world does not wait for such as these, nor does Liberty pause to heed the plaint of men and women with a grouch. She does not wait for those who have a special interest to serve, nor a selfish reason for depriving other people of freedom. Holding her torch aloft, Liberty is pointing the way onward and upward and saying to America, "Come."

To you the supporters of our cause, in Senate and House, and the number is large, the suffragists of the nation express their grateful thanks. This address is not meant for you. We are more truly appreciative of all you have done than any words can express. We ask you to make a last, hard fight for the amendment during the present session. Since last we asked for a vote on this amendment your position has been fortified by the addition to suffrage territory of Great Britain, Canada, and New York.

Some of you have been too indifferent to give more than casual attention to this question. It is worthy of your immediate consideration—a question big enough to engage the attention of our Allies in war time, is too big a question for you to neglect...

Gentlemen, we hereby petition you, our only designated representatives, to redress our grievances by the immediate passage of the influence to secure its ratification in your own state, in order that the women of our nation may be endowed with political freedom that our nation may resume its world leadership in democracy.

Woman suffrage is coming—you know it. Will you, Honorable Senators and Members of the House of Representatives, help or hinder it?

BUT – liberty will overcome

Thanks to supporters– help us fight

Other countries have suffrage

Suffrage – big/immediate issue

Petition to pass suffrage – then U.S. can again lead in freedom

Final appeal to Congress

¶4: Catt thanks members who already support her cause and encourages them to vote during the present session. She makes this appeal timely by referring to other countries and states that have adopted women's suffrage already.

¶5: Catt chastises those who have ignored the debate over suffrage—it's too big an issue—equating it with war.

¶6: Catt encourages lawmakers to support the suffrage amendment in their various states. She argues that only by granting suffrage can the U.S. once again be a leader of democracy in the world.

¶7: Catt's final appeal is for members of Congress to pick a side: are you with us or against us?

BIG PICTURE

Main Idea: Women's suffrage is inevitable; lawmakers should support it now for reasons both moral (making America freer and more democratic) and practical (better political prospects in the future).

Author's Purpose: To persuade members of Congress to pass a bill sending a proposed amendment to the Constitution (to grant women the right to vote) to the states

1. C

Difficulty: Medium

Category: Global

Strategic Advice: A question asking for an author's or speaker's primary purpose is a Global question. Consult your big picture summary to predict the correct answer.

Getting to the Answer: The pre-passage blurb tells you that Carrie Chapman Catt is speaking to Congress on behalf of the National American Woman Suffrage Association. In the first paragraph, she asks lawmakers to support a constitutional amendment. Additional context provided in the passage makes clear that the amendment would grant women suffrage, making **(C)** correct. While (A) captures a key part of Catt's reasoning, it does not reflect her purpose in giving the speech. (B) distorts the passage; Catt is calling for suffrage, not necessarily for female candidates. Similarly, (D) goes beyond the scope of Catt's speech.

2. C

Difficulty: Easy

Category: Global

Strategic Advice: Some Global questions ask about an author's overall attitude or the perspective from which the passage was written. Use your big picture summary of the main idea and the author's purpose to predict the correct answer.

Getting to the Answer: In the passage, Catt gives a speech in which she appeals to legislators to pass a constitutional amendment, or legislative reform, to grant women suffrage. She is speaking as a political activist. **(C)** is correct. The other three answers all distort Catt's purpose and main point.

3. B

Difficulty: Medium

Category: Detail

Strategic Advice: A question calling for a claim the author or speaker makes explicitly in the text is a Detail question. The research clue in the question stem points to paragraph 3.

Getting to the Answer: In paragraph 3, Catt acknowledges the opposition to woman suffrage, citing "woman haters" (line 29), "old males of the tribe" (lines 29–30), and "women, too" (line 40). She suggests that the arguments against suffrage are dated and ineffectual, and goes on to state that the world will not slow down and that the cause of liberty will continue. Her underlying message is that suffrage is unavoidable, which echoes her earlier statement in line 17. All of this leads to **(B)** as the correct answer. (A) distorts Catt's response; whether opponents continue to speak out is almost irrelevant in her opinion. (C) is contradicted by Catt's rhetoric; suffrage is just, and it will prevail. (D) distorts Catt's argument; she addresses the moral and sociological reasons for endorsing suffrage.

4. C

Difficulty: Medium

Category: Command of Evidence

Strategic Advice: This is a Command of Evidence question. The correct answer to this question will cite text that provides evidence, either in reasoning or in fact, to support the claim in the answer to the previous question. Each answer choice contains line numbers that help focus your research as you evaluate the choices.

Getting to the Answer: The answer to the previous question asserts that woman suffrage is inevitable. Evidence to support this claim would show that suffrage is advancing, as demonstrated by **(C)**. (A) provides practical reasons to support suffrage but does not support a claim of its inevitability. (B) offers thanks to lawmakers who already support suffrage. (D) is an exhortation to immediate action, not evidence of inevitable victory for the women's suffrage movement.

5. B

Difficulty: Medium

Category: Vocab-in-Context

Strategic Advice: The correct answer to a Vocab-in-Context question like this one will reflect the specific meaning of the word in the context of the surrounding sentence and text.

Getting to the Answer: The text states, "Every delay, every trick, every political dishonesty from now on will antagonize the women of the land more and more" (lines 19–21). The surrounding text suggests that women will become only more resolved to their purpose as a result of delay, as well as more angry—or bitter—with politicians who forestall them, making **(B)** correct. (A) implies that women will give up; Catt clearly argues the opposite. (C) distorts the meaning of the sentence;

tricks and delays will anger women and encourage them to punish deceitful politicians at the polls. (D) sounds plausible (after all, the delays and tricks are meant to impede suffrage), but it doesn't fit the context of the sentence, which predicts a backlash from these tactics.

6. A

Difficulty: Medium

Category: Inference

Strategic Advice: The word "implies" identifies this as an Inference question. The correct answer will reflect the underlying or implied meaning of the excerpted line within the context of the surrounding text. The research clue points to the second half of paragraph 2.

Getting to the Answer: The text cited in the question stem asserts that new voters (the women enfranchised by suffrage) will mistrust political parties whose members have resisted suffrage; this leads to **(A)** as the correct answer. The message of choice (B) runs counter to Catt's argument. (C) goes too far; Catt asserts that women voters will flee the parties who have resisted suffrage, and not that they will vote for female candidates. (D) states the opposite of what Catt implies here.

7. D

Difficulty: Hard

Category: Function

Strategic Advice: A question that asks why an author included a detail or reference in her text is a Function question. Research the referenced detail (in this case, Treitschke) to see the author's purpose for including it in the passage.

Getting to the Answer: For Catt, Treitschke is an example of an outsider who thought he knew better than the residents of an area what was best for them. She analogizes that to male politicians who think they know what's best for women. Choice **(D)** describes Catt's use of the analogy. (A) conflates Treitschke with Catt's later statement that women's suffrage had passed in the United Kingdom. (B) misapplies the Treitschke example to a different argument Catt makes in her speech. (C) distorts Catt's point about Treitschke; she used him as an example of someone whose reasoning was misguided reasoning, not as someone who was anti-democratic.

8. B

Difficulty: Medium

Category: Detail

Strategic Advice: The word "indicates" signals a Detail question. The correct answer will clearly restate or paraphrase something stated in the passage.

Getting to the Answer: The entire speech is, of course, about women's suffrage, but Catt addresses the current status of women's right to vote explicitly near the end of paragraph 4. There, she tells Congress that suffrage laws have recently been passed in Great Britain, Canada, and New York. That directly supports choice **(B)**. (A) is too extreme; in paragraph 3, Catt admits that suffrage still had opponents, but she does not state that only a minority of voters support it. (C) is not supported anywhere in Catt's speech. (D) is a distortion of Catt's claim that momentum for women's suffrage was on the rise.

9. C

Difficulty: Medium

Category: Command of Evidence

Strategic Advice: This is a Command of Evidence question asking you to locate the line in the passage that supports the correct answer to the preceding question. Use the line references in each answer choice to research the passage text.

Getting to the Answer: The correct answer to the preceding question asserted that, at the time of Catt's speech, at least one state in the Union had already granted women the right to vote. That is directly supported by the text cited in choice **(C)**, where Catt encourages suffrage advocates in Congress with the fact that New York recently gave women the right to vote. (A) is Catt's warning to the members of Congress about a potential backlash for their failure to support the suffrage amendment, which is unrelated to the fact that women in New York can vote. (B) cites text in which Catt describes the opponents of women's suffrage; that might have tempted a test taker who chose (A) for the preceding question. (D) contains Catt's call to action in paragraph 6; that does not support the answer to the preceding question.

10. D

Difficulty: Medium

Category: Vocab-in-Context

Strategic Advice: This is a Vocab-in-Context question; the correct answer will correctly replace the original word and retain the meaning of the original sentence.

Getting to the Answer: The text states that Catt and her supporters want congressional lawmakers to "redress our grievances" (lines 66–67), meaning to set right—or to remedy—the ills committed against women. **(D)** reflects this meaning. None of the other choices fits logically into the sentence.

11. D

Difficulty: Medium

Category: Inference

Strategic Advice: The word "implied" signals an Inference question. The correct answer will follow from Catt's statement in the excerpted line. The research clue points you to paragraph 6.

Getting to the Answer: The excerpted line states that once women have the political freedom granted by suffrage, then the nation will resume its leadership in democracy. The implication is that the nation is not a leader in democracy as long as it denies women the right to vote. Therefore, **(D)** is correct. (A) is too extreme for the specific statement cited in the question stem. (B) misuses a detail from paragraph 4; other countries have adopted women's suffrage, but Catt doesn't say they've called on the United States to do the same. (C) is too broad; the quoted statement focuses specifically on the right to vote, not on electing women.

Reflect

Directions: Take a few minutes to recall what you've learned and what you've been practicing in this chapter. Consider the following questions, jot down your best answer for each one, and then compare your reflections to the expert responses on the following page. Use your level of confidence to determine what to do next.

Describe active, or strategic, reading on SAT passages.

What do SAT experts mean by summarizing the big picture of a passage?

How can writing brief "margin notes" help you answer SAT Reading questions more effectively?

What does an SAT expert look for in the question stem of an SAT Reading question?

Why do expert test takers predict or characterize the correct answer to each SAT Reading question before assessing the answer choices?

What will you do differently on future passages and their questions?

Expert Responses

Describe active, or strategic, reading on SAT passages.

Because the SAT asks many questions about why an author has written the passage or about how the author makes a point, expert test takers read for the author's purpose and main idea. Noting keywords that indicate a shift or contrast in points of view or that indicate opinions and emphasis help keep SAT experts on point, as they anticipate where the passage will go.

What do SAT experts mean by summarizing the big picture of a passage?

To read for the big picture means being able to accurately summarize the main idea of a passage and to note the author's purpose for writing it. The big picture summary helps you answer Global questions and questions that ask about the author's opinion or point of view.

How can writing brief "margin notes" help you answer SAT Reading questions more effectively?

Jotting down margin notes provides a reference "map" to the subject or purpose of each paragraph in the passage. It helps locate specific subjects or opinions expressed in the passage when they are called out in the questions.

What does an SAT expert look for in the question stem of an SAT Reading question?

Each question stem indicates the type of question and contains clues as to whether the answer will come from researching the passage text or from the big picture summary. Many question stems have specific clues (for example, line numbers or references to details from the passage) that tell you precisely where to research.

Why do expert test takers predict or characterize the correct answer to each SAT Reading question before assessing the answer choices?

Predicting or characterizing the correct answer allows you to evaluate each answer choice one time and to avoid rereading for every answer choice. Incorrect answers often distort what the passage said or misuse details from the passage, so it's best to research the passage once to know what the correct answer must say before diving into the choices.

What will you do differently on future passages and their questions?

There is no one-size-fits-all answer to this question. Each student has his or her own initial strengths and opportunities in the Reading section. What's important here is that you're honestly self-reflective. Take what you need from the expert's examples and strive to apply it to your own performance. Many test takers convince themselves that they'll never get faster or more confident in SAT Reading, but the truth is, many test takers who now routinely ace the Reading section were much slower and more hesitant before they learned to approach this section systematically and strategically.

Next Steps

If you answered most questions correctly in the "How Much Have You Learned?" section, and if your responses to the Reflect questions were similar to those of the SAT expert, then consider the Method for SAT Reading Questions an area of strength and move on to the next chapter. Come back to this topic periodically to prevent yourself from getting rusty.

If you don't yet feel confident, review the material in this chapter, then try the questions you missed again. As always, be sure to review the explanations closely.